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# Review of A Genealogical Chart of Greek Mythology, by Harold Newman and Jon O. Newman

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# Bryn Mawr Classical Review

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**Harold Newman, Jon O. Newman, *A Genealogical Chart of Greek Mythology*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003. Pp. 272. ISBN 0-8078-2790-8. \$75.00.**

**Reviewed by Fred W. Jenkins, University of Dayton ([fred.jenkins@udayton.edu](mailto:fred.jenkins@udayton.edu))**

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Anyone who has taught a survey of classical mythology is aware of the great importance of genealogy, whether framed in terms of Diomedes and Glaukos, the family curses of Laios and Pelops, or the foundation myths and hero cults of various city-states. Most standard texts offer a few simplified genealogical charts of the Olympians and various royal houses, but none presents a detailed overview of all the family relationships. Until now, only Carlos Parada's *Genealogical Guide to Greek Mythology* (Jonsæder: Paul Astroms Forlag, 1993) offered reasonably complete coverage. Parada's A-to-Z listing of mythological figures provides much information on their parentage, marriages, children, and manner of death, as well as a conspectus of primary source references. However, it is encumbered with an annoying coding scheme, and the genealogical charts, which resemble industrial flowcharts, are largely unreadable. The Newmans' work offers a far more attractive alternative.

*Genealogical Chart* is a slightly misleading title, although much of the book comprises sections of a large chart. The Newmans provide a "master chart," an abbreviated genealogical chart of major figures, which also functions as a visual index to the "complete chart," 72 chart segments spread over 144 pages. If one were to cut up two copies of the book, one could in fact assemble a large single chart. The complete chart includes 3,673 mythological figures, all presented as part of one big, dysfunctional family. The Newmans follow the traditional pattern of genealogical tables, so that the information is fairly clear at first glance. They do use a number of typographical conventions, such as Roman type for males, italics for females; these are explained in the introduction for those who are bemused. Most figures on the chart have an abbreviated reference to the chief literary source; full citations are given in the index.

The 95-page index is an important reference work in its own right. The index provides an alphabetical listing of all figures on the chart and some who are not. The index notes relationships (parentage, consorts, offspring), provides references to the literary sources, and notes variant relationships that do not appear in the chart. Since the chart lists only one version, one must consult the index for complete information. For example, the chart presents the Homeric version of Aphrodite's birth from Zeus and Dione; the more common account of the foam-born goddess is relegated to the index. Beginning users, therefore, are well advised to start with the index and then proceed to the relevant sections of the

genealogical chart. Many may be satisfied with the index alone, although the charts help fix each figure in a wider web of relationships and will be more appealing to the visually oriented.

How do Parada and the Newmans stack up in terms of coverage? Both cover all of the usual suspects thoroughly. But there are some variations on minor figures. For example, the Newmans list seven different mythological characters named Herakles, while Parada has only four. Yet Parada has one Herakles, also identified as Maceris, who is not in the Newman list. Parada notes three women named Phthia, while the Newmans added fourth, a paramour of Zeus found in Servius on Aen. 1.242. Both cover the expected sources, such as Homer, Hesiod, the tragedians, Apollodorus, Nonnus, etc. However, the Newmans do a better job of ferreting out scholia and the like. Overall, the Newmans provide more complete coverage, especially for minor figures.

Vanessa James' recent *Genealogy of Greek Mythology* (New York: Gotham Books, 2003) should also be noted here. James appeared at almost the same time as the Newmans' work. Her approach and audience are somewhat different. While Parada and the Newmans both target serious scholars and advanced students, James designs her chart for beginners and casual students of mythology. Her 17-foot fold-out chart covers nearly as many figures, over 3,000. However, she does not provide as much coverage of minor figures nor does she give references to the literary sources. There are many sidebars which give summaries of myths and numerous attractive illustrations. James is an attractive aid for high school and freshman surveys; serious scholars will want the Newmans' work.

There are, of course, a number of online sources for such genealogical tables. A good example is the [Theoi Project](#). It offers seven linked family trees: Olympian gods, water gods, sea gods, Titans, daimones, monsters, and protogenoi. These categories are not the clearest to the average user. They do lead into screen after screen of genealogical tables, with all names linked to descriptive entries. It is easy to get lost and the Theoi Project tables lacks the visual clarity of the printed tables found in James and the Newmans.

In general, the Newmans have done a careful job. I have not spotted any noteworthy mistakes and few typographical errors. One glaring typo occurs on p. 160, where Zeus is said to be the son of Cronus and Hera. The typography of the charts is about as good as can be expected. Except for the master chart, most have decent sized type and are quite legible.

The major defect of this enormous undertaking is its attempt to strait-jacket all of Greek mythology into a single family tree, oversimplify and neglecting the many variants. It fails conceptually by seeking an order that never existed. However, the book remains a mine of information concerning family relationships in Greek mythology. I would hesitate to recommend it to a student but am glad to have it on my shelves.

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